



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

Melissa Vignau
Natural Resources Specialist
7794 Folsom Dam Road
Folsom, CA. 95630

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for New Melones Lake Area
Resource Management Plan (CEQ# 20090381)

Dear Ms. Vignau:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our comments are provided in accordance with our December 17, 2009 agreement that EPA provide our comments no later than January 8, 2010. We appreciate the additional time to conduct our review.

Our review has not identified potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. We recommend the final EIS (FEIS) include a clear commitment to additional project-level environmental review for new roads, facilities, services, and activities once site-specific project design alternatives are determined. Detailed comments are enclosed requesting additional information which may be of use to decision makers and the public.

In light of the above comments, we have rated the draft EIS (DEIS) as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "*Summary of Rating Definitions*"). We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the FEIS is released for public review, please send one hard copy and one CD ROM to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Laura Fujii, the lead reviewer for this project. Laura can be reached at (415) 972-3852 or fujii.laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen M. Goforth".

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

Enclosure: Summary of Rating Definitions
Detailed Comments

EPA DETAILED DEIS COMMENTS FOR THE NEW MELONES LAKE AREA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN, CALAVERAS AND TUOLUMNE COUNTIES, CA., JAN 07, 2010

Additional Information Request

In the interest of full disclosure, and to aid the public and decision makers in their evaluation of the proposed resource management plan, we recommend the final EIS (FEIS) include the following information:

1. Describe management measures to minimize impervious surfaces and the reduction of water infiltration that may occur with implementation of Action WR 26. This action proposes to harden surfaces prone to erosion and subject to extensive visitor use through use of compacted aggregate, paving with asphalt or concrete, soil cement, or other hardening agent (p. 3-4).
2. Provide information on potential particulate matter emissions from the detonation of explosives at the nearby Carson Hill Mine and Blue Mountain Minerals Mine in River Canyon (p. 5-3). Describe whether these emissions adversely affect the New Melones Lake Area, and, if there is an effect, the measures that will be taken to try to reduce this effect.
3. Commit to working with Lower Stanislaus River stakeholders to address downstream water quality impairment. The Lower Stanislaus River below New Melones Lake is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act, Section 303(d), for diazinon, group A pesticides and mercury. It will likely be included in the revised 303(d) list for the above pollutants, plus chlorpyrifos and water temperature. There are no established Total Maximum Daily Load requirements for this watershed (p. 5-20).
4. Consider conducting a study to evaluate the risk of mine-based pollution to New Melones Lake. Other reservoirs have reported pollution from historic mining sites. In addition, New Melones Lake is located in the heart of the Mother Lode gold mining region, and is in proximity to active and abandoned mines, increasing the chances that mine-based pollution will find its way into the lake (p. 5-20).
5. Identify in Table 3-1: List of Actions by Resource and Alternative, the implementation priority of the listed actions.
6. Provide a description of potential funding sources and the efforts to obtain funding, given that a 50% cost-share partner is required for recreational projects (p. 1-7).